

Getting Ready for Inauguration 2009

Podcast Transcript

Hi, I'm Jody Lyle, a public affairs specialist for the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. If you haven't been here lately, I can tell you that the entire city is preparing for the upcoming inauguration. All this activity made me wonder about our agency's role in this historic event. What are we doing to prepare? So, I'm hitting the streets and visiting park offices around the city to find out.

13 days to go...

The National Park Service Central Incident Command Team is assisting the National Capital Region with this big event. This group of employees normally works in parks such as Grand Canyon, Rocky Mountain, and Zion, but for the last few weeks they have been here in D.C. helping plan the park service part of the inauguration – things like coordinating rangers who will be on duty that day and ensuring that the public has a safe and fun time. Today, I caught up with Jason Lott.

Jason Lott – “I'm part of the logistics section. I'm just doing the ordering, meals, and sleeping plans.”

So what types of things are you ordering?

Lott – “Mobile shower, been working on that today. Also setting up the bubble for cots and meals.”

The bubble is an inflated tent facility that can house about 350 people. Many park service employees will stay here to avoid street and bridge closures around the city.

9 days to go...

Today, I'm meeting with Kirsten Talken-Spaulding, She's in charge of interpretive programming for the inauguration. Kirsten and her team are organizing exciting presidential programs and exhibits with presidential themes at park sites throughout the region.

Kirsten Talken-Spaulding – “We are working on a brochure, kind of first drafts of it.”

Talken-Spaulding – “The level of sensitivity that we need to have to security issues, to the multitude of different agencies, and individuals that are with this.”

Kirsten's team is also creating an inaugural campaign-style button with 44 stars around it.

Talken-Spaulding – “We would have these posters out in information areas and different sites throughout the region where people could be invited to get that button and take it home as a souvenir and recognize again that they're in a national park where history happens and they get to be a part of that history.”

So I'm hoping that when we walk around that day that we are going to see a million people wearing a million buttons.

Talken-Spaulding – (laughing) “I'm hoping the same thing too.”

8 days to go...

National Park Service employees are buzzing around Pennsylvania Avenue and Lafayette Park today just north of the White House. I'm meeting with Scott Tucker, the park manager at Presidents Park.

Scott Tucker – “As we are walking through Lafayette Park you can see a lot of construction activity and a lot of security fence lines. If you were here in mid-October, it was a normal day here in Lafayette, but late-October we started a lot of our inaugural planning.”

Tucker – “Probably one of the most important pieces is right up here in Lafayette Park which was the beginning of construction by the District of Columbia of the presidential reviewing stand and the media reviewing stand. And these are temporary structures. By the end of February, they will be gone and there won't be a trace of these structures being here.”

Tucker – “As we walk, all the trailers we see in front of us is actually the media trailers.”

So they're already camped out here.

Tucker – “They are already here getting ready.”

Tucker – “One of the great challenges we find in Presidents Park and the National Park Service is balancing out the interests of the presidential inauguration with resource protection. And as an example, lining Presidents Park are trees. Also lining Presidents Park right now are bleachers. So one of the measures we took in action was to create tree boxes around all of the trees on Pennsylvania Avenue in order to protect these trees so that they can continue to grow and be here for dozens of other presidential inaugurations in the future.”

A sense of place

I'm back in the office with my boss David Barna, the Chief of Public Affairs. So, how do you see the park service role on this big day?

David Barna – “While dozens of agencies have a role in the inauguration, the park service is honored that our contribution revolves around the places where these events take place. Many of the festivities will occur on park lands and so we are getting things ready.”

Barna – “President elect Obama will attend the concert at the Lincoln Memorial two days before the inauguration. The stage for his speech is nearly complete.”

Barna – “Crowds will view the swearing-in ceremony from the grounds of the National Mall. Visitors will be able to see the Washington Monument, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the WWII Memorial, and others.”

Barna – “The parade will march up Pennsylvania Avenue and will conclude at Presidents Park and the White House. All of these areas are cared for by the National Park Service.”

Barna – “We protect all these places and the stories they tell every day, but on January 20 we will be making history.”

Rolling Credits

National Park Service
Office of Communications & Public Affairs

Produced by

Jody Lyle

Interviewed

Jason Lott

Kirsten Talken-Spaulding

Scott Tucker

David Barna

Special thanks

Peggy O'Dell

The Central Incident Command Team

Gerry Gaumer

Kathy Kupper

Rick Lewis

Bill Line

Jeff Olson

John Stanwich